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ABSTRACT

Six hundred seventy one inner city high school women were administered an attitude scale designed to measure their sex role perception. The data was subjected to principal factor analysis with a varimax rotation. Four underlying factors comprising sex role perception were determined. The factors and their implications for educators are discussed. Specific curricular strategies and resources for expanding sex role perception are discussed and related to the four factors. (Author)

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The Factors Underlying Sex Role Perception and Their Implications for Educators and Counselors*

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Abstract

Six hundred seventy one inner city high school** women were administered an attitude scale designed to measure their sex role perception. The data was subjected to principal factor analysis with a varimax rotation. Four underlying factors comprising sex role perception were determined. The factors and their implications for educators are discussed. Specific curricular strategies and resources for expanding sex role perception are discussed and related to the four factors.

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INTRODUCTION

In this society things go very differently for boys and girls, men and women, male and female, masculine and feminine, father and mother. Differences in sex, a fortuitous assignment to the category of female infant or male infant, determine what it is that will be expected, what it is that will be encouraged, and what it is that will be permitted. For women and for men, the sexual assignment provides much of the criteria for normalcy and the models by which goals are established.

The sugar 'n spice and snails and puppy dog tails is only the beginning of an often subtle and always limiting socialization. As a general rule, we observe that men give and that women receive. Men do. Women have it done to (for) them. Men lead. Women follow. Men direct. Women manipulate. Men care for women. Women care. Men reason. Women emote. Men progress. Women preserve.

The research and resources described in this paper emerge from the authors' concern with first, the narrow socialization of boys and girls into masculine men and feminine women and second, the limited options that rigid definitions of masculinity and feminity impose upon young people. This concern serves as the basis for an effort to determine what factors are examined in the process of defining sex role and most importantly, what it is that educators can do once an analysis and description of sex role has been made.

This research and its implications for curriculum development are based on the following assumptions:

(1) that the status quo of male and female sex role perceptions is narrow, limited and rigid;

(2) that this sex role perception influences choices relating to interpersonal interactions, life style and vocational choices; (Cook and Rossett, 1975)

(3) that the problem of rigid sex role assignment and resulting perception should be recognized, analyzed, and remediated by the schools.

This paper provides data which will assist high school personnel in acting on this mandate.

BACKGROUND

It is the concepts of masculinity and feminity and their relation to the way individuals behave which is their sex role identification. The National Center on Sex Roles in Education defines sex role identifications as "the degree to which an individual aspires to or performs roles that are deemed appropriate for his/her sex." Sex role perception, as utilized in the paper and the Cook-Rossett instrument, involves the individual's perception of the way girls, boys, women, and men as a distinct group because of their sex ought to behave. Lynn (1969) utilizes this distinction by defining sex role perception as "the desire to adopt behavior associated with one sex or the other."

The authors examine the factors which comprise the sex role perception of a large sample of inner city

adolescent women. In contrast to the work which focuses on the differences between males and females or judges the appropriateness of one's sex role identification, this work attempts to define the nature of masculinity and femininity as perceived by high school students and then to provide strategies for intervention based on the four factors that emerged from the analysis of the data.

METHODS

An attitude scale, constructed by the method of summated ratings (Likert, 1932) was used to determine the sex-role perception of 671 adolescent women from an inner New York City high school. The construction of the scale has been previously described (Cook and Rossett, 1975).

The women sampled ranged in age from 13 to 20 years with an average age of 16.6 years. The occupations of both mothers and fathers of these women were categorized according to specifications given by the U.S. Bureau of Census (Miller, 1970). Of the women sampled, 45% came from families where the father's employment was categorized as non-professional, 8.3% from families where the fathers were professionally employed, and 4.3% had fathers who were unemployed. The women sampled stated that 40.7% of their mothers were unemployed, this category included employment in the home, 11% stated that their mothers were professionally employed, and 28% that they had mothers who were non-professionally employed. Table 1

presents a tabulation of the employment categories for both mothers and fathers.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The responses to the 20 items comprising the sex-role perception scale were intercorrelated* and factor analyzed by means of sub program FACTOR, which is one of the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) programs (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbenner, and Bent, 1975). The program handles up to 100 variables and computes a principal factor solution retaining only those factors with eigenvalues of one or greater. The obtained solution was rotated using a normalized varimax rotational procedure.

RESULTS

Only items with factor loadings of .35 or greater were considered for interpretation. A total of 18 items fulfilled this criterion and were used to define the factors. The results of the analysis are presented in Tables 2-5.

Factor I is characterized by high loadings of item 1; "The man should be the one to ask the woman to marry him," and item 16; "Boys should be the ones to ask

*The matrix of inter-item correlations is available from the first author on request.

girls for dates".

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

This factor was labeled "Social Assertiveness vs. Social Submissiveness" by the authors and is quite similar to a factor referred to by Fand (1955) as "Women's Role is Submissive". Loadings of other items on this factor such as item 9; "If a girl wants to dance with a boy, she should ask him," and item 19; "Girls should pay for their half of the date," help clarify that items loading on this factor are those that differentiate between women who perceive their role in life as being submissive or non-assertive in the presence of males as opposed to women who are willing to take the initiative in male-female relationships.

Factor II has been labeled an "Occupational Opportunities" Factor.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

This factor is characterized by loadings of such items as 5; "Women should be able to be firemen if they want to," and item 17; "Men should be able to fix TV sets better than women". Factor II can be conceptualized as measuring the adolescent women's attitude towards traditional vs. non-traditional types of employment for women. The overlap

of item 7 on factors I and II can be interpreted as an indication of the relationship between social assertiveness and occupational choice.

Factor III has been designated "Male Role in Family Management" factor.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

This factor is characterized by loadings of items such as item 2; "Fathers should help with the housework," and item 13; "Boys should help with housework as much as girls". This factor seems to underlie a woman's attitude towards the role that a male should play in the sharing of family and home related responsibilities. Factor III agrees conceptually with a factor (also designated as Factor III) that is discussed by Haavio-Manilla (1970) in a report of a study she conducted concerning sex-role attitudes in Finland. She designated Factor III of her study as "Division of Household Tasks Between Man and Women" and concluded that it measured attitudes towards boy's and men's participation in housekeeping.

Factor IV of the present study seems to represent a "Female in Family Management" factor.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

It is very similar to Factor IV of the Fand Inventory, "Home Oriented, Duty to Children Stressed" and is characterized by such loadings as item 6; "Mothers should stay home and take care of the house and children", and item 11; "Taking care of her family should be more important to a woman than her job."

DISCUSSION

The authors are not surprised by the four factors which emerged from the data. In addition to a marked parallelism with prior research (Fand, 1955; Haavio-Manilla, 1970), they reflect important components of human life: social interaction, work, and home. In these three arenas, girls and boys, women and men observe and perform the rituals which teach the questionable polar concepts of ideal masculinity and ideal feminity.

The role of the public school has generally been that of a reflector of society's values and mores rather than that of a change agent (Spindler, 1963). The position taken by the authors is that high schools can and should take responsibility for shaping behaviors which will lead to expanded sex role options. The identification of specific factors comprising sex role perception makes possible the implementation of systematic strategies keyed to these factors. The development of materials and procedures based on these factors will enable schools to broaden the adolescent woman's and man's perception

of his/her role in life and eventually society's perception of women and men in general.

The following is a discussion of intervention strategies that may be used to expand the sex role perceptions of adolescent women and men. These strategies are categorized according to the factors to which they are applicable.

Factor I: Social Assertiveness vs. Social Submissiveness

One of the more popular techniques presently used by those involved in assertiveness training involves asking persons to role play situations which demand assertive and non-assertive behavior on the part of the female (Capinera, Eignor, and Schmidt-Posner 1976). Sample situations can be generated by asking high school students to identify those situations for which they would like to develop assertive behaviors. Small groups of students then role play these situations, taking both assertive and non-assertive approaches.

There is a large body of literature and resources concerning assertiveness training. The teacher involved with adolescents can adapt many of the exercises included in these materials for his/her students. The following is a selected list of resources:

Assert Your Self, A Handbook about Assertiveness Training for Women. Order from: Seattle-King County N.O.W., 2252 N.E. 65th Street, Seattle, Wash. $2.00.

Bem, Sandra L. and Bem, Darly J. "Training the Woman to Know Her Place: The Power of a Nonconscious Idealogy", in Leavitt, Harold J. and Pondy, Louis R. (eds.) Readings in Managerial Psychology, 2nd ed. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. 1973.

Bloom, Lynn Z., Coburn, Karen, and Pearlman, Joan. The New Assertive Woman, New York: Delacorte Press. 1975.

Cotler, Sherwin B. and Guerra, Julio. Assertion Training: A Humanistic Behavioral Guide to Self-Dignity, Research Press (announced for March, 1976).

Galassi, John P., DeLeo, James S., Galassi, Merna D., and Bastien, Sheila. "The College Self-Expression Scale: A Measure of Assertiveness", Behavior Therapy. March 1974, pp. 165-171.

Jakubowski-Spector, P. An Introduction to Assertive Training Procedures for Women. Washington, D.C., American Personnel and Guidance Association. 1973.

Lakoff, Robin. Language and Women's Place, Harper Colophon Books (Harper and Row). 1975.

Lange, Arthur J. and Jakubowski, Patricia. Responsible Assertive Behavior: Cognitive/Behavioral Procedures for Trainers, Research Press (announced for March, 1976).

Rathus, Spencer A. and Ruppert, Carol A. "Assertion Training in the Secondary School and the College", Adolescence. 1973, Vol. 8, pp. 257-264.

Sansbury, David L. "Assertive Training in Groups", Personnel and Guidance Journal. 1974. Vol. 53, pp. 117-122.

FILMS: Available from American Personnel and Guidance Association, Film Department, 1607 New Hampshire, Washington, D. C. 20009

Assertiveness Training for Women, Part I
Assertiveness Training for Women, Part II
Back to School, Back to Work

Factor II: Occupational Opportunities

Political pressure by feminists has led to the publication of materials and procedures for expanding work options for males and females. The following resources will assist teachers and counselors in expanding occupational opportunities for students:

"Sex Fairness in Career Guidance - A Learning Kit"
ABT Publications
55 Wheelen Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Business and Industry Discrimination Kit
National Organization for Women
1957 E. 73rd Street
Chicago, IL 60645

"Women at Work: A Three Part Counseling Series"
National Institute for Education (NIE)
Dr. Ivan Charner
1200 19th Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20208 (books in press)

"Career Education for Girls K-12 - Informal Bibliography #31"
ERIC Clearinghouse on Career Education
Northern Illinois University College of Education
204 Gurler School
Dekalb, IL 60115

Sex Equality in Guidance Project
American Personnel and Guidance Association
Margellen Verheyden-Hilliard
1607 New Hampshire Avenue
Washington, DC 20009

PEER
1029 Vermont Avenue N.W.
Suite 800
Washington, DC 20015

Dr. Louise Vetter - Center for Vocational and Technical Education
The Ohio State University, Colombus, OH 43209

Non sexist, career-oriented instruction could include any or all of the following learning opportunities: visits to the school by women and men who hold jobs not considered traditional for their sex; field trips for students to sites where women and men are performing functions not traditionally associated with their sex; the introduction of instructional materials (films, texts, posters, etc.) which depict women and men in non-traditional careers; the encouragement by teachers and administrators of female and male students who demonstrate interest in an expanded repertoire of careers; the nurturing of school clubs and organizations related to vocations which encourage both male and female participation; the acknowledgement by counselors that women will need special learning opportunities in order to broaden their perceptions and the scheduling of female counselees for this additional attention; the placement of female and male students as apprentices or interns on jobs considered non-traditional for their sex; the publication of reactions from these non-traditionally placed interns; and the publication of the experiences of graduates of the school or program who now hold non-traditional jobs.

Factors III and IV: Male and Female Role in Home Management

The students' homes can serve as a laboratory for developing strategies that address these factors. Parents can be brought into the schools to serve as resources and

to answer questions: "How are tasks accomplished in your home?" "How do you feel about it?" "What about brothers' and sisters' responsibilities in the home?" "Should their roles differ based on their sex?" "If you had the opportunity to re-define home management roles in your home, how would you do it?"

After the students have listened to adults and read selected descriptions of home interactions, the teacher might introduce photographs of unresolved situations in the home (e.g. a pile of dishes; un-made beds; a car with a flat tire, etc.). The teacher could use these photographs to solicit reactions, initiate discussion and practice non-traditional home management behaviors.

The following is a list of resources useful in addressing non-sexist parenting:

Comer, Lee. "The Myth of Motherhood". The Spokesman. London, England, 1970.

Howe, Florence. "Sexual Stereotypes Start Early". Saturday Review, October 16, 1971.

Levy, Betty. "The School's Role in the Sex-Role Stereotyping of Girls: A Feminist Review of the Literature". Feminist Studies, 1972.

Merriam, Eve. "The Matriarchal Myth". Up Against the Wall, Mother. Edited by Elsie Adams and Mary Louise Briscoe. Beverly Hills: Glencoe Press, 1971.

Mitchell, Juliet. Women: The Longest Revolution. Cambridge, Massachusetts: New England Free Press, 1970.

Rosenstein, Harriet. "On Androgyny". Ms. Magazine, May, 1973.

Stolz, Lois. "Effects of Maternal Employment on Children: Evidence from Research". Child Development, 1960.

Weigand, Jonathan. "Men: The Single Father". Ms. Magazine, January, 1973.

Wortis, Rochelle Paul. "The Acceptance of the Concept of the Maternal Role by Behavioral Scientists: Its Effects on Women". American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, October, 1971.

CONCLUSION

The research presented in this paper indicates that there are four well defined factors underlying an adolescent woman's perception of her sex-role. Definition of these factors and development and implementation of strategies to broaden this perception should have a major longitudinal effect on the role men and women play in our society. Implementation of the strategies is clearly a responsibility that the high schools can and should effectively and immediately assume.

TABLE 1

Parental Occupational Categories*

Occupational Category	Mother's Employment	Father's Employment
Professional	11.0	8.3
Non-professional	28.0	45.0
Unemployed	40.7	4.3
Omit	20.2	42.4

*Table entries are in percentages.

TABLE 2

Factor I: Social Assertiveness vs. Social Submissiveness

Item Number	Factor Loading	Sex-role Perception Scale Statement
1	.53	The man should be the one to ask the woman to marry him.
4	.54	Boys should let girls go through the door first.
7	.42	When a boy and a girl are on a date, the boy should drive the car.
9	.52	If a girl wants to dance with a boy she should ask him.
16	.67	Boys should be the ones to ask girls for a date.
19	.42	Girls should pay for their half of the date.

TABLE 3

Factor II: Occupational Opportunities

Item Number	Factor Loading	Sex-role Perception Scale Statement
3	.35	It's more important for boys to get good grades than girls.
5	.37	Women should be able to be firemen if they want to.
7	.37	When a boy and girl are on a date, the boy should drive the car.
8	.44	Men who are ballet dancers are sissies.
14	.47	It's more important for parents to teach their son to play baseball than their daughter.
17	.61	Men should be able to fix TV sets better than women.
20	.34	The most important thing I can do when I grow up is get married.

TABLE 4

Factor III: The Male Role in Family Management

Item Number	Factor Loading	Sex-role Perception Scale Statement
2	.47	Fathers should help with the housework.
12	.40	Fathers should iron their own clothes.
13	.49	Boys should help with the housework as much as girls.
15	.49	Fathers should cook dinner for the family sometimes.

TABLE 5

Factor IV: The Female Role in Family Management

Item Number	Factor Loading	Sex-role Perception Scale Statement
6	.45	Mothers should stay home and take care of the house and children.
11	.54	Taking care of her family should be more important to a woman than her job.

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